

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 EB-08 OES-09 IO-13 /106 W
-----085172 200409Z /16

R 181854Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2687
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 02089

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, CH, TD
SUBJECT: VISIT OF VICE PREMIER KENG PIAO TO TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 2048

1. THE MISSION FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA HEADED BY VICE MINISTER KENG PIAO DEPARTED TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ON JULY 16, FOLLOWING A ROUND OF TALKS WITH CABINET MINISTERS AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE GOTT, LEAVENED BY THE CUSTOMARY VISITS TO POINT LISAS AND TOBAGO, ATTENDANCE AT A "BETTER VILLAGE" SHOW, AND VISITS TO CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

2. ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT ISSUED BY WHITEHALL, THE DELEGATION COMMITTED THE PRC TO PURCHASE 5,000 TONS OF NATURAL ASPHALT. STUDENTS FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ARE TO BE SENT TO CHINA TO LEARN CHINESE, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING PROFESSORS OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WAS DISCUSSED. THE STATEMENT REPORTED THAT BOTH DELEGATIONS AGREED TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE AND TO SHARE INFORMATION
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AND EXPERTISE IN THE AREA OF PETROLEUM TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S EXPERIENCE IN THE EXPLOITATION OF ITS OFFSHORE RESOURCES. THE EXPRESS QUOTED MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND MINES ERROL MAHABIR AS SAYING THAT THE GOTT MADE AVAILABLE TO THE DELEGATION "A DRAFT OF ITS PRODUCTION SHARING WITH THE OIL COMPANIES ON THE EAST COAST."

3. MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS JOHN DONALDSON WILL VISIT CHINA "SHORTLY" TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSIONS, AND THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO STUDY THE PROPOSED NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION WILL VISIT CHINA TO LOOK AT OPERATIONS OF SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS THERE (THIS GROUP WAS IN WASHINGTON CONFIDENTIAL

ON A SIMILAR MISSION JULY 10-14). A TABLE TENNIS TEAM FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WILL BE SENT TO THE PRC BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, AND GOTT HOPES THAT THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A CULTURAL GROUP.

4. PM WILLIAMS RECEIVED THE DELEGATION BOTH INFORMALLY AT DINNER AND FORMALLY FOR "TALKS," WHILE DAUGHTER ERICA (WHO IS PARTLY OF CHINESE ANCESTRY) PAID A CALL ON MRS. KENG PIAO.

5. EDITORIAL IN THE EXPRESS OF JULY 17 COMMENTED ON THE FAILURE TO FOLLOW UP PIOUS WORDS EXCHANGED IN STATE VISITS OF THIS KIND (E.G., PM WILLIAMS' 1974 VISIT TO CHINA) WITH ACTIONS, AND EXPRESSED A HOPE THAT THIS VISIT WOULD LEAD TO MORE THAN JUST TALK. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE VISIT WAS EXTENSIVE, AND FROM A PUBLIC RELATIONS POINT OF VIEW, VISIT CAN BE CONSIDERED A SUCCESS.

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6. COMMENT. EMBASSY HAS IMPRESSION THAT WILLIAMS AND OTHERS IN GOTT WOULD LIKE TO INCREASE COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL TIES WITH PRC, BUT ARE HARD PRESSED TO KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT IT; PHYSICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DISTANCES BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES ARE GREAT. SMALL BUT ECONOMICALLY INFLUENTIAL CHINESE COMMUNITY HERE (WHICH HOSTED RECEPTION FOR DELEGATION) IS LARGELY MADE UP OF "PETIT BOURGEOISIE" AND NOT LIKELY TO FIND PRC'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AN ATTRACTIVE ONE TO EMULATE, DESPITE OBVIOUS LONGINGS FOR CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR ANCESTRAL HOME. FOX

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MINISTERIAL VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PORTO02089
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780297-0592
Format: TEL
From: PORT OF SPAIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780748/aaaabnzq.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4d2a5171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 PORT OF SPAIN 2048
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1970289
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF VICE PREMIER KENG PIAO TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
TAGS: PEPR, CH, TD, (KENG PIAO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4d2a5171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014